

# *The Midland*

A MAGAZINE OF THE MIDDLE WEST

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VOL. V

MARCH—APRIL 1919

NOS. 3-4

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## **The Adventurer**

By DAVID MORTON

I have known beauty, but I had not known  
Such stirring loveliness as yours could be;  
Never Romance, for all her magic thrown  
About the world, never the beckoning sea  
Called to adventure as your still face calls,  
Where hints and whispers speak and lure and dare  
To storied cities and grey, ivied walls,  
And undiscovered regions lying fair.

Your face is all the twilight of the earth:  
I glimpse dim castles and half-open doors,  
Wide rooms of tragic beauty, halls of mirth,  
And dark seas beating on forgotten shores. . . .  
Upon the threshold of these lands of Fate,  
Now eager and adventurous, I wait.

## **When Comes That Hour**

By JOHN RUSSELL MCCARTHY

When comes that hour that is not mine, but Death's,  
Bring me no books, my friends, to read me tales  
Of prophets and of miracles. Nor let  
The black-coat with his psalm-book enter in  
Where Death and I are making friends at last.

Three things, or one of three, that God has made,  
I would have with me in that solemn hour:

If I might have a flower from the field  
To mind me of the beauty that is God,—  
If I might have a dog to lick my hand,  
Dumbly recalling faith in flesh and blood,—  
If there might be a storm to tear the sky  
And shout of power that endures forever,—

I would make friends with Death right cheerily.

For in that hour I would be near indeed  
To God Almighty and His blessed dreams.

## **The School Teacher**

By MARJORIE SUTHERLAND

"You never can tell about these quiet people," observed Dagobert Dow wistfully; "their hearts are hid away like the fire in a still mountain. Silent and tame maybe they have lived for years until they can't stand it any longer. Everything suppressed in them, restrained, bottled up — and then some little thing, no bigger than a spark, maybe, some little thing reaches the depths and they break forth. That was the way with Miss Nichols."

"Did you know her well?" I asked, for I had heard snatches of village moralising on the story of Ella Nichols.

"Knew her for twenty-one years. I reckon I knew her better than anyone else. Everyone was fearfully surprised of course. People are always surprised by earthquakes and volcanoes, and the queer thing is they are surprised even now. There are folks here in Roxbury who can't understand Ella Nichols to this day. But then years don't do some folks any good at all."

I was sitting under a birch tree with Dagobert Dow. When I came on a compulsory vacation to the middle-western village of Roxbury, I never expected to find a man like Dagobert Dow. In a country where there is nothing but corn, thousands of miles of corn that stretch out as far as the eye can reach like the miles of the sea, I expected that the people were as quiet and exemplary and as nearly alike as

the corn stalks. But I made a mistake. I found Dagobert Dow, gardener and general handyman for the village — a crockery man, I suppose one might say with the pharisee, but one who had rare if momentary insight into the bottomless depths of the human heart. I found him first on one of my walks. He was mowing grass in the cemetery, and because I was an idle passer-by carrying no respectable spade and wearing no husking gloves, he hailed me in a friendly fashion and began to talk about the crops. From that time on I indulged Dagobert's obvious curiosity and love of talk, and though he wearied me at times I was not sorry in the long run, because it all led to the birch tree and the story of the school teacher.

"How long ago did it happen?" I asked.

"About six, no seven years ago this October. A fine mellow fall just like this. I remember it particularly. The corn-stalks were bent over with their heavy ears; grapevines loaded; tomatoes red and luscious until frost. And the clearest nights — light and still with just a little breeze blowing to let you know 'twas earthly. I worked for old Mr. and Mrs. Nichols for a long time, and after they died and Miss Ella just kept on at the old place, I did the same chores. They always kept cows and had a little hay and corn. You've been past the place? Kind of gray old shack with those drooping old maples. Geraniums never would bloom in those urns, although Miss Ella had me set them out every year. They can't rent the house to anyone who

knows, and I reckon they never will. It has the look, the musty cave-of-a-look as the school teacher said herself after it began to get on her nerves. But, Lord, how much a person can stand before he really breaks. Why, she taught eighth grade in Roxbury for twenty years. Just think — twenty years of hammering sums into contrary young ones! I know what I'm talking about. I hustle for six. Every day rain or shine she would walk to town to the old school house, and everyone thought she would teach till she dropped, so steady, you know. Nothing ever stopped her. Her mother was an invalid and sat in a chair for years making little nick-nacks out of thread, but Miss Ella hired a Bohemian girl to stay with the old lady during school hours and kept right on teaching. After Mrs. Nichols died Miss Ella changed a little. Restless and maybe more thoughtful. She used to sit on the porch without any magazine or fancy work. Before that she was always making some kind of lace, but that summer I noticed she just sat still with her hands kind of lost, looking off to Jim Crosby's row of poplars. Poplars are so slim and ghostly in the distance, bowing all together as if they were obeying orders. At night I used to come by with the milk and say, 'Good evening, Miss Nichols,' commonplace-like, you know. I wanted to say, 'What are your thoughts, Miss Nichols?' for what people really think is as secret as the grave. Perhaps it's better so, but I think it would not be so hard to live if things were not so hidden."

"What did Miss Nichols look like?" I asked.

"Well," sighed Dagobert, "she wasn't much on looks. Forty-one, you know, and battering sums for twenty years. What could you expect? And she knew no way of deceiving the public. Some women know, but Miss Ella never had any time to learn, and never any reason, I guess. But she was neat-looking — maybe you know what I mean. But when she got the idea that somebody noticed her looks, the change was wonderful. She intended to shingle the barn that fall, but she bought two dresses instead that cost thirty dollars apiece — and the same old shingles are on the barn yet.

"I never knew just how it began, but one day early in October I saw Miss Ella talking to a man who was mending a fence by Richard's pasture south of her house. I didn't know him, but I'd seen him working there for several days and I supposed it was one of Richard's hired men. A husky fellow, straight, with crisp brown hair and a pleasant manner. Not much over thirty, I found out afterwards, and a good looking chap that anyone, man or woman, might like to look at twice.

"When I came in that night with the milk Miss Nichols was standing by the kitchen window looking out at the poplar trees. Her supper was burning on the stove, but she didn't seem to notice it. And the first thing she said was — 'It's awful the way I live, ain't it, Dagobert?' 'How do you mean?' I asked, rather taken aback, for Miss Ella and I never talked nothing much but business. 'So alone in the old house with no one around but Shep and Tom.' 'But

you have the youngsters with you all day,' I answered foolishly. 'Yes, other people's youngsters by the dozen, but what good does that do me?' she replied sharply. 'I guess it would be too noisy for you over at my house,' I said, thinking of the bed-time rows. 'An old damp cave-of-a-house,' she muttered more to herself than to me. 'I want you to cut down some trees, Dagobert. Yes, those old maples that my father planted. It's too shady around the house. Who is that man mending Richard's fence?' — Sharp as a shot like that. I told her I didn't know him, but I reckoned it was one of the hired men from Richard's place. 'Well, I just wondered. He's more friendly and polite than most hired men.' And then she began to stir her scorched tomatoes as if she had no idea what was the matter with them.

"And the very next day on her way home from school I saw Miss Nichols talking again to the fence man. That night I was late with my milking and it was just dusk when I came to the house. A mellow breeze was dancing the dry leaves all around the yard and there was a great yellow evening star blinking through the maples. And all of a sudden I saw Miss Ella standing by the well as still as the old pump itself. 'Well,' I said, 'you almost scared me standing there so quiet. It's a fine night,' I blundered or something like that. She never said a word for a minute as if I was no more human than the milk pails. And then she seemed to come to with a start. 'Dagobert Dow,' she said, 'what are all those lights off there?' Pointing through the windy ma-

ples. 'Lights in peoples' houses, I reckon. Stuarts and Wesleys and my house and old Mr. Osborne's.' 'Yes,' she replied kind of shaky, 'where there are lights there are people, not a person, but people — fathers and mothers and children. I never thought of it before, but all around my still old place there are *homes*. Even the Osbornes, old as they are, have had a home. You remember the Osborne children? A happy lot while they were growing up. We lost many apples because of the boys, but I never cared. And now the old folks sit alone by the fire, but they have something to remember at least. A person is entitled to a home, ain't he, Dagobert? What do you think?' I really thought she was a little out of her head, but I said I guessed folks was entitled to lots of things they never got. And Ella Nichols laughed, the poorest excuse for a laugh I ever heard, and I began to think it was one of those nervous breakdowns women have.

"For a while things went along about the same as usual. I had a good deal of work around her place, digging the potatoes and chopping down the trees she spoke of. And every time I noticed Miss Ella I could see that something was on her mind, something different. We had the fattest vegetables that year. Beets, carrots, and squashes fit for a fair, but she didn't seem to take any interest in them. 'What are they good for?' she said kind of spitefully. 'Take them home to your family, Dagobert, I've no use for them.' Now I thought that was queer for her to give me the vegetables, for the Nicholsons were



very careful about giving anything away that would bring in a dollar. Not that I call them stingy, but just to give you an idea how things were beginning to break up in Miss Ella. Restless, but quiet, pegging along the same old path, and yet she wasn't the same steady person I'd been working for all those years. But I didn't quite guess what the trouble was until the Sunday I went over to her place about five o'clock in the afternoon, and out by the grapevines stood Ella Nichols and that man. She looked a little plagued when she saw me, but when I came along the path she said boldly — 'We were looking at the grapes. Mr. Dow, this is Mr. Mason.' It was the first time I had seen him very close. He wore a dark blue suit and there was a particularly clean look about him. I figured afterwards that it must have been that neat look that took Ella Nichols in so completely. I always thought she overdid the matter of soap and water myself. His face was not red, but a clear tan and his eyes were very brown and there was a queer little twist up-wards to his lips. I can see him now, strong and handsome as he looked that bright autumn Sunday by the grape arbor. In a few weeks I grew to hate him and his blasted brown eyes, but on that day I think maybe the devil hadn't quite got him. I remember how he looked at the corn field south of the barn. Just twenty acres, but a beautiful yield if I do say it — and then at the pasture. Miss Nichols had only thirty acres. Small of course, but as fine acres as ever lay out of doors. And I said to myself that

very day that that chap was looking over her farm pretty sharp. And Miss Ella — the poor woman — she had her hands knotted tight behind her, and her eyes were excited as if something new had happened to her. Think of it — excited like that for the first time when you are forty-one! I went on out to the pasture, but I never gave a thought to the old cows.

“The next Friday I told Miss Nichols I was ready to see the carpenter about repairing the barn, but she told me to let it go. She said she hadn’t time to attend to it now, for she was going to Sioux City the next day — a fine state of affairs when she had been talking about the leaky barn for the last six months! That night when I came to cool the milk Miss Ella called out from the sitting room and told me to find the pans, for she was too busy to come herself. I was a little ruffled at having to fuss around in a woman’s kitchen, and when I went out I was mean enough to look in the sitting room window to see what she was so blooming busy about, and what do you think she was doing? Trying on a hat, a big one with a feather, and she had on a new dress, purple, with silver lace on it. I hardly knew her — pale Ella Nichols decked out like that, for she always wore black and gray and stiff white waists as plain as a cupboard door. She pulled her hair out a little from her face and she tipped her head this way and that until I could hardly believe my eyes.

“And then Ed Mason began to stop at Miss Nichols’ on Saturday nights when he came to town from

Richard's north farm. Not long you know, but he'd drive in the yard and ask about her flowers or make some excuse like that, and she would try to keep him as long as she could, but he seemed anxious to get away. He puzzled Miss Ella fearfully. Anyone could see that. She couldn't make him out at all, but what could she know of a live man when she'd been scolding little Johnnies and Susies all her life? But one Sunday she got him to stay to tea, and she wore the purple dress and I guess things went a little better; at least the neighbors began to notice his visits and I heard my youngsters at home giggling about Miss Nichols's beau. I never said anything myself, not even to my wife, but one day I saw him talking to her from the road; I was close to him and I thought the roguish curl in his lips looked mean and greedy. He was a queer fellow — friendly, and yet sly. He never liked me, I knew that well enough, for I guess he noticed how I watched him. He was not the least stooped like so many of us, but straight and quick and always spruce-looking. Just the kind to stir almost any woman, but to a poor school teacher like Miss Ella I suppose he seemed like a miracle.

“As the fine Indian Summer days slipped into frost I kind of hoped things were going well for Miss Ella, for she perked up wonderfully with the new clothes and the hope of having things like other women. Ed Mason came to see her every Sunday and stopped sometimes through the week, but I could see that his visits puzzled her a good deal, for

she didn't know how to please him. She wanted to pet him like she had always petted her collie, but you know a husky chap like Mason wouldn't stand for anything like that; but he led her on and on and gave her little presents, a string of beads and a watch chain. She showed them to me herself and blushed like a girl all the time.

"And then something happened, some sort of quarrel, I suppose, for the excitement of hope that had aroused her at first died in her like a snuffed wick. She was fearfully absent-minded and there was a kind of hardness in everything she said. She had to drive herself to school. She didn't complain but I knew how she hated it, and the young pirates and the silly lesson-books she's been facing for twenty years. Almost the last straw that broke Miss Ella was when Mason drove past her house one night with a young girl, Minnie Howard, sitting in the buggy beside him. Drove in daylight too so she'd be sure to see them. I wasn't really scared till that, and then I said to myself — look out — and sure enough Ella Nichols didn't care what happened after that. Everything had fooled her so. Ed Mason could do what he pleased. Men always can. I reckon it's the reason they're such sinners.

"I'll never forget the dull rainy night towards the last of November. I carried in Miss Ella's coal and kindling a bit late. She was eating her supper alone as usual with Shep sitting by her chair, and the big maltese cat blinking at her from the top of the sewing machine. She took no interest whatever in any-

thing before her. 'Twas a good deal as if she was doing some disagreeable chore like baiting a fish hook or cleaning a chimney flue — so don't-care, you know. I was worried and uneasy to see her like that, but there was nothing to do but just stand around as helpless as the cat and dog. I was about to go out the door when Miss Ella kind of started and said — 'Dagobert, you — you needn't come back any more.'

'Come back?' I said right after her. 'How do you mean?'

'Come back *here* like you've been doing for — for ever since my father died. The cows and all — your pay —' She stopped kind of choking and hid her face in her hands.

'Fer God's sake,' I says, shutting the door, 'what's the matter, Miss Nichols? What's the matter with me?'

'Nothing, Dagobert, nothing — Oh, I'm in so deep!' she sighed like the tiredest thing in the world.

'It's that man Mason,' I says sharply. 'I know. It's none of my affairs judging other peoples' lives, but he don't mean you any good, Miss Ella, coming here night after night. People —'

'What are they saying?' she asked like a hiss.

'Nothing,' I lied, 'but you know Roxbury.'

'Tell them to mind their own affairs,' she snapped.

'It's not human nature,' I said kind of blunt. 'I mean well, you know, Miss Ella,' for she had covered her face again and her shoulders were shaking, 'I've worked a long time for you and I'm sorry

there's no one close to stand by you now, and I don't want to be prying, but has he — has he asked you to marry him?'

'No,' she groaned hoarsely with her eyes still covered.

'He's a scoundrel then to treat you so, and I'll send him off myself if you're afraid to,' I offered stupidly. And then she stared at me more like a ghost than a woman.

'Send him off?' she cried. 'What for?'

'For making a fool of you, say it I must, Miss Nichols. If you were a young girl now —'

'But I'm *not* a young girl. There's the difference, the awful difference. You don't understand, Dagobert Dow, you don't understand *anything*. You're too hard and selfish and old to understand that I — that I want him —'

'You love him, then?'

'Yes.'

'There's nothing more for me to say,' and I turned to the door again. And then I stepped close to Ella Nichols and I said — 'I guess I understand more than you think. I'm no school child.' And she broke down and cried. I intended to be pretty pious, you know, before that, but the misery of her, the pale, shaking misery — 'I'm sorry, Miss Ella, sorry. Ain't there anything to help? The church, perhaps?' (for she had always gone to church). 'No,' she said as chilly as the rain slapping the window panes. 'But the Bible,' I floundered, and she jumped as if I had hurt her. 'Yes, the Bible,' she

faltered, 'I've thought of that, but I don't dare look at the thin still leaves. If I do I'm afraid I'll go back to the straight and narrow path — and I don't want to go back, Dagobert. It's a lonely, joyless path. I've tried it all my life and I know. Year after year, the same old round of dull duties — going to school and to church and planting seeds, and yet — I have never known what joy is —' Then she was doing this for joy — cutting loose from the old shore at forty-one for joy! 'I wish you joy,' I stammered, 'but I don't believe Ed Mason'll bring it to you — Shall I go?' 'Yes,' she said, the bitterest hardest word I ever heard.

"And I went out of her house, the house I'd been going to for ten years and more. Maybe you can guess how I felt, not for myself so much, but for her. What was the school teacher thinking of? What was she going to do? I went off through the grove as if I was going home, but I waited there in the dark to see if Mason came. About eight o'clock he drove in the yard. And as I stood there under the damp old trees my heart began to boil with hate and indignation against that man. I knew it was none of my business, and yet in a way it was. I'd been sort of looking after Miss Ella herself all those years as well as her cows and crops. And she was a lone woman and desperate now. If any harm came to her and the neighbors should say ugly things about her as they were already beginning to, I should be fearfully sorry — and I went back to the barn where Mason was putting up his horse.

'What's the idea?' I said standing in the path when he came out with the lantern in his hand. 'What's Miss Nichols sent me off for?'

'Because we don't want you, that's why,' and he started to go past me.

'*We?*' I says. 'And are you the boss here now?'

'I certainly am, and I want you to get off the place and stay off.'

'Not till I know you're treating Miss Ella fair and square,' I snapped, feeling my clothes getting tight.

'Miss Ella's affairs and mine are none of your business,' he growled, swinging his lantern around sassy-like.

'Why don't you marry her then like a man instead of compromising her like this?'

'I'll teach you to insult her —' and he knocked me down in the wet grass.

"I jumped up mighty quick and laid him flat as he'd done me. The old lantern smashed on the ground and went out. A pretty pair we were there in the dark floundering around like a couple of hounds, but I'm a strong man when I'm roused and I hope never to hate anyone as I hated that man. Powerful in the arms. Comes from pitching hay, you know, when I was a boy. I grabbed his hands and held them tight to his sides like a rope. 'You were too quick to start a row,' I says as cool as could be. He made an awful lunge and nearly threw me over, but I leaned over him hard till I felt the mud ooze under us. A fine rain blew in my face and damped Mason's Sunday clothes — and dark, sir, dark as hell, all but the little light gleaming from Miss Nichols's kitchen.



'Let me go,' he growled as low as he could, for I guess he didn't want anyone to hear us. 'Let me go or I'll blow yer head off.'

'And what with?' I jerked, suspicious in a minute. minute.

'None of your business, but I've got it in my hip pocket.'

'You've told more than you ought,' I says sassy-like. 'Fellers don't carry things like that in this country without getting into trouble. Hand it over.' But I guess we'd been talking louder than we knew, for just then the kitchen door opened and the school teacher stood there slim and still in the yellow light. 'Mr. Mason,' she called kind of scared.

'Get off me,' he whispered and gave an awful kick and I lost my grip. He jumped up, whipped out a pistol quick as lightning and shot at me in the dark. If he hadn't been so shaking mad I wouldn't be telling you about it now, but it ripped past me and hit the shed door with a thud. To this day on a rainy fall night I can hear Ella Nichols's thin gasping scream. It was more as if she had been shot, sniped like a rabbit in the hedge.

"I slipped behind the shed as quick as an unarmed man ought to, and I heard Mason trying to brush the mud and rain off his clothes. 'It's nothing, Miss Ella,' he called, 'nothing but yer blasted man Dow. He tried to shoot me. Yes, sir, what do you think—jumped on me like a cat,' I heard him lying as he went up the kitchen steps. Miss Ella was holding the door open and one hand clutched

her left side. I wonder what she thought of her man that night with his back covered with mud, no hat, and his fine hair all ruffled up. But just then the door slammed to and shut in the yellow light and the muddy villain and the school teacher. Slammed to and brought old Dagobert Dow to his senses. I knew when I felt his body squirming under me and when he let that out about his gun, and better still when he shot at me, I knew about how much joy Miss Ella Nichols was likely to get — and I ran down the road to Roxbury as if the very witches were after me. Went straight to the sheriff's house (Bill Davis, it was then) and told him how Ed Mason had fired at me. Davis had some trouble in finding his deputy and we had to run around a bit, but it wasn't so very long before Bill's bays was stepping off at a pretty good pace towards Miss Ella's.

“There was the light in the sitting room just as before peeping out from the edges of the curtains. I led the way to the kitchen and the sheriff knocked on the door, a good hard knock, but no one came. ‘Miss Nichols,’ he called sharp as tacks, but the old house never said a word. Then he called again and walked right in. I hated to go into her house like that with officers, I, who had been peacefully carrying in milk and kindling for over ten years. And I thought with a jump how muddy our shoes were — Miss Ella dreaded dirt so. Right through to her sitting room, the three of us, without even a brushing. Not a sound, not a person, just the clock tick-

ing away on the shelf and the fire flames skipping up now and then past the draft in the stove. 'Search the house,' ordered Davis in his most sheriff voice. But I stood still and pointed to her secretary, for the doors and drawers were all burst open and papers were scattered about the floor. 'Kidnapped the school teacher and her papers too, I reckon,' I muttered, my heart going sick inside me.

"Bill and his men started through the rooms, but I slipped out to the barn. Not a sign of his horse and buggy. With my lantern I saw his tracks in the soft ground — man, horse, and wheels, but no sign of a woman. If the school teacher was not with Ed Mason, where was she? I leaned against the grind stone like a sick man. I felt the same choking in my heart that I did the night my boy died. Then I went back over the ground very careful, and in a smooth place by the wood shed I found a woman's foot prints. I didn't call the men, for if Miss Ella was to be found I wanted to find her myself. They're kind of rough, sheriffs, but I suppose they can't help it. I crept along bent over so that I could see the marks, for they led right out to the garden and towards the grove, the path I always took home. And I hadn't more than reached the third row of trees when I saw someone in the path standing straight and still as a grave stone. 'Ella — Ella Nichols,' — I cried, but she never answered. Standing like some strange creature in a picture, her eyes gleaming in the dim light, her old gray shawl held tight over her breast and in her other hand a lantern

with no light in it. For a minute we stood staring at each other as if we were strangers. I remember how the wind blew her dress, the fine silk dress she wore for that man, blew it against the oily old lantern. I can see her yet of a rainy night, stark and still, with her silly lantern. 'Tell me,' I says again, 'tell me, what's happened? Why are you out here in the night? Where's Mason?' But images tell no tales and neither did the strange-looking woman under the dripping maples. If her eyes had not shone so fiercely and if her hand hadn't clutched white at the shawl I should have called her a corpse instead of a living being. And the way she looked at me — Ed Mason's shot was nothing to those piercing eyes. 'Speak, Miss Ella,' I cried, coming closer and holding out my hand. 'Tell me everything. We have come to help you. Mason shall not hurt you, only tell me what you know.' But do you think she spoke? Never a word, sir, no more than the twisted old tree beside her. A dead person don't stand up like that and roll the eyes — no, Ella Nichols wasn't dead, but all that we knew of her, mind and senses, had gone out like the poor light in her hand. 'Come,' I said softly as I might say to my littlest boy when he's ailing, 'come back to the house, it's too cold out here,' and I reached for her hand, slipping the lantern away. She didn't struggle or hold back, but walked along with me limp and still as her collie might have done. I dreaded to take her to the house, her house, where those sheriffs were, but there was nothing else to do. Up the slip-

perly steps and into the room where Davis was looking at the papers he'd found on the floor. I held up my hand to Bill in warning, so he wouldn't roar the same questions I had asked her, and then I drew a chair to the fire, for she was trembling from head to foot. I told Bill she was stark mad as far as I could make out and I thought we ought to have some woman in the house right away, and Bill sent for his wife—and that's all there is about the school teacher.

"She's down at the County Farm now. Seven years this December, and we don't know no more what happened than if she had died. And Ed Mason never came back to tell us, for he took her deeds and insurance papers, although they never did him no good, I reckon. Folks have different opinions, of course. There was a great doctor from Omaha, a specialist for nervous sickness, who said the school teacher's condition was brought about by continuous nervous strain with sudden shock to the emotions—whatever that means. Some think Mason struck her when he stole her papers, but I have always kind of thought it was a case of starvation."

And the birch tree swayed softly above us just as it had swayed that other October when the nights were light and still with just a little breeze blowing to let you know 'twas earthly.

## To Us In Eden

By MAHLON LEONARD FISHER

To us in Eden, where the wood  
A shelt'ry hut has heaved there,  
Will come a summons understood —  
A whisper down the cloudy stair.

And we shall close our oaken door,  
Who nevermore may come agen  
To where the sagging, furrowed floor  
Is easy to the feet of men.

And we shall climb the midnight sky;  
And we shall walk into the Dawn,  
Until at length before us lie  
Its level splendors, like a lawn. . . .

But for this Eden in a grove  
And at the edge of Heaven set,  
Our spirit-fingers, interwove,  
Will tighten, and our eyes be wet!

## **To The Memory of Buffalo Bill**

By RICHARD WARNER BORST

Immortal youth,  
You for whom waits the universal spectacle,  
You who have led at your heels  
The wild broncho, the evil mustang,  
And the tawny buffalo  
Of the prairie stretches;  
You who have led these creatures  
Through the thoroughfares of cities  
And past the thrones of princes:  
For you, now,  
The deep abysses between the stars  
Are full of strange shapes.  
Behemoth and leviathan are there,  
And nameless sprawling monsters,  
Whose sides are as the sides of mountains,  
Whose cries are more terrible than thunder,—  
Vague forms that have dwelt  
Since time began,  
On unknown stars;  
In the nethermost glooms  
Of all the uttermost realms of cosmos,  
Hide immense and eyeless beings,  
Beyond the reach of the beams  
Of the mightiest of the suns,  
Deep in the caverns of unimagined space.

A task awaits you, dreamer, adventurer, —  
To summon the infinite round-up  
With a wave of your imperious hand;

To gather together  
In the gulfs between the stars and the planets,  
An innumerable menagerie  
Of all earth-born and star-born creatures,  
Creatures ramping and screaming,  
Yelling outlandish yells,  
Whose voices reverberate interminably  
Against the oceans and the mountain-sides  
Of thrice ten million worlds:  
Creatures with fangs that gleam  
And with wings that spread over the moons;  
Whose shapes we cannot understand  
Because of the haunts in vastness  
Behind the universes,  
Where they have dwelt.

And the beings who command  
The life in other spheres,  
Who fight long wars  
And call themselves the lords of creation,  
Some of them will be marshalled  
To join the procession  
And parade — parade.

And so amazing will be the sight,  
And so astounding the tumult,  
Of all those far-sought marvels,  
As they make lamentation,  
Crying out in the inter-stellar void;  
And so mysterious the looks  
Of all those foreign, aye, other-worldly men, —  
If they be men, —  
That the angels will cease



Their antiphonal choiring  
For the space of half an aeon,  
Gazing spell-bound,  
While, past the throne of Jaweh,  
In your broad stetson,  
With your pointed goatee,  
On your gray stallion,  
Leading the procession,  
You ride by!

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### Two Poems

By MAXWELL ANDERSON

#### DESPAIR

Now, when the north-wind drags the winter down  
Upon our helpless prairies here, and cries  
All night long in the darkness and the cold,  
Hating itself for being what it is —  
So bleak and miserable, with frosty hands  
And chill breath that forever shut it out  
From friendship — I must linger out of doors  
A moment when I can to watch the clouds —  
Crouched, grey, old men, whispering and muttering  
To one another of the storms to come.

The rust-red winter sunset drooping low  
A bleared and frozen head against the grey  
That rims the prairies, and the dull new night  
Upon us. Sadness permeates the earth,  
The lifeless light, the wind; and throughout all  
Creeps the awed foretaste of unending cold.

### AUTUMN AGAIN

The winds have risen,  
The plains are swept;  
The tiny prison  
Where birds have slept  
Sways to the blast  
Clinging fast.

Fallen the leaves,  
The boles are bare;  
Earth receives  
A plaid to wear  
To save from the breath  
Of near death.

Sweet and sweeter  
The wild fruit falls;  
And that frost-cheater,  
The meadow-lark, calls  
To a supper of seeds  
From the weeds.

## **The Postage Stamp**

By WILLIAM MERRIAM ROUSE

A two-cent postage stamp came in a letter from Emmeline. Grandma Abigail Dunker wrapped it up in a little piece of white paper and put it in her worn reticule. Then she returned the reticule to its accustomed place in the top drawer of the cherry bureau in the front room.

She was not much interested in the letter itself. It was merely a duty-inspired pencil scrawl from one of her daughters; with the stamp as a careless afterthought. There were children, and grand-children, and great grand-children, scattered far. Grandma kept little count of them, or they of her. She had learned that generations come and go — and her generation had gone.

The postage stamp was another matter; and of great present importance, for many months had passed since Grandma Dunker had known the feel of money. Her pension check came every quarter, but she at once turned it over to the general store at the village, whence she received all necessities. She knew there was never quite enough to pay her bill; and she had not dared these several years to ask for any cash.

"Lucy Ann!" she called, in the cracked bark of old, old age. She moved into the kitchen, thumping her cane smartly on the bare floor. "Plague take that young 'un! Where's she gone now?"

Lucy Ann, a half grown grand-child, had been stranded by some fortuitous wave on the western shore of Grandma Dunker's life. Grandma accepted her as a natural event, and brought her up in the way that the future wife of some hard-working man should go. At this moment Lucy Ann rose from behind the cook stove with the broom in her hand and the color of belligerency in her healthy face.

"The cat's stole a rind of pork I had to grease the fryin' pan," with an eye on her grandmother's cane, "and I was jest tryin' to show her she's only a cat."

"You let the cat alone and listen to me! Your Aunt Emmeline has put a postage stamp in her letter, and I'm goin' to send for a mail order catalogue!"

Lucy Ann drew in a deep breath. Her eyes glistened. The cat, unheeded, scuttled into the pantry.

"Goody! Ain't that great!"

"It's satisfyin'," admitted Grandma. "I've got tired of sendin' to borrow the Pangborn's, and have them come after it the very next day. We'll have one of our own now. We'll show 'em, I guess, we ain't too poverty-stricken to have a catalogue!"

"It'll be a newer one than the one they got!" Lucy Ann's voice shrilled in excitement. "Do you s'pose they'll be colored pictures of the dresses? I'll pick me out a —"

Grandma Dunker stopped the flood with a thump of her cane.

"You won't look at it a-tall if you let that bread burn in the oven, young lady! Stop your clack and take out a loaf and let me see it!"

Silence fell upon Lucy Ann, but nothing could suppress the anticipatory joy that shone from her face. With that joy the old woman was in perfect sympathy. She, too, felt joy after the manner of her years. A flame with Lucy Ann, with her it was a glow.

She would write the letter that evening and within a week the mail order catalogue would be in her hands; a thing to amuse, to stimulate the imagination, a sedative for all unsatisfied longings. Such catalogues had become classic, displacing the almanac: one of them was inexhaustible through a year of evenings. Through the valley and over the countryside as far as the knowledge of Grandma Dunker extended the catalogue functioned thus. Most people, indeed, were able actually to order things and receive them, thrilling, from the rural free delivery carrier. But not she, nor the few very poor — and to them the catalogue was greatly more than to the others. They read endlessly the close printed pages in keen but safe pleasure: they were not able to buy at all.

Grandma Dunker settled down in her wooden rocker in the front room — her sleeping chamber and sanctum — and looked out into the dull autumn afternoon. Not even prospect of the catalogue could lift her up for long on such a day. Dead leaves; black trees; and the steely river beyond them. Sky and mountains met in gray accord. It was one of the days when the humming past came up to mock her — to take away the toothsome of what she ate and the warmth from her friendly wood fire.

It was fitting that Laura Thorne should come in for a few minutes on such a day: and because it was a day of memories Grandma did not see the limp, the threadbare coat, the wrinkles and the faded eyes of her visitor. Instead she saw silk, flaring out over hoops: she heard laughter and the sound of violins. Lights and the jingle of sleigh bells, and tables piled with the dainties of a former time, were in her mind.

"How are you, Grandma?" The voice had in it the taste of repeated sorrows, and disconcertingly it brought the older woman back to the distant present.

"I'm smart." Her cane banged tremendously. "Lucy Ann — plague take that young 'un! — drag in a chair out of the kitchen for Mis' Thorne, an' don't be all day about it, neither! I'm glad you come. I was jest thinkin' about you, and your Pa, and your Gran'pa."

"I don't do much else but think, nowadays." She sat down clumsily.

Grandma Dunker dug into a deep pocket and put on her glasses, peering through them searchingly. Some more than usual leadenness in the tone and bearing of the other had stirred her.

"Laury," she used her privilege of dropping ceremony, "I done the washing for your fambly for twenty years, didn't I? And I helped nuss you and the rest of the Mansfield children, didn't I? Hey?"

"Yes, Grandma, you did."

"Well, Laury, I'm a-goin' to ask you something that I want to know. I want to know if you're well

pervided for, and comfortable. Have you got lots of firewood and plenty — plenty to eat? Hey!”

Laura Thorne swallowed hard.

“Yes.”

“Be you sure?”

“Yes.”

“Well, then, they’s something else I want to know!” Grandma waxed belligerent. “I want you should tell me if you hear from Jimmy reg’lar. Does he write to you, hey?”

“I get a check every week — like clockwork!”

“But Jimmy himself don’t write, does he?”

Mrs. Thorne straightened up, with a flare of the Mansfield pride in her faded eyes.

“Jimmy Thorne is a good son — I don’t want to hear a word against him! Not a word!”

“Who’s sayin’ anything against him? Hey?” She pounded the floor fiercely. “Don’t you talk back to me, Laury Thorne! I put your first short dresses on you — and washed dew-dabs and fol-de-rols for you for the next twenty year! Huh!”

A big tear, slow, unlovely, rolled down the nose of the other woman.

“Huh!” Grandma Dunker snorted. “I guess I remember when my husband, Abram, was the best teamster your Pa had! I guess I remember when your Pa owned ’most all this valley, from mountain to mountain! String of his teams goin’ by all day long! They wa’n’t anybody in this county that didn’t listen when Alexander Mansfield said anything! Didn’t I help every time they was a party up

to your house — you an' Mary an' Sophy wanted to dance all night in them days!"

Grandma's voice grew milder, and ceased. Suddenly Laura Thorne put her head down, awkwardly, and wept with the difficult grief of age.

"Jimmy — don't — write — to — me!" she said, through her sobs. "Not a word since along in the spring — just a check comes in an envelope. I'd rather he'd write once than send all the money in the world! I know he's busy — New York's a busy place — but it does seem as though he could write to his mother once in a while! He's all I've got!"

The outburst died away as suddenly as it had begun. Laura Thorne wiped her eyes, and the twisting of her face relaxed.

"You've wrote to him, ain't you?"

"Of course!" indignantly. "I've written every week — always!"

"How long's he been in that pesky city, hey?"

"He went right there from college, five years ago. He was home once, for a few days, you know."

"Huh!" Grandma took off her spectacles and put them in her pocket. "Have you got that receipt for brown bread the way your Ma made it?"

"What?" Mrs. Thorne asked, dazedly. "Brown bread? Oh, yes!"

"You write it off for me and I'll send Lucy Ann up for it afore dark. I can make brown bread but, shucks! it ain't anything to what your Ma could make! It'll taste like old times to have some brown bread after her receipt."



"All right," answered Mrs. Thorne, absently. She rose and moved toward the door. "I must be going — I just ran down for a few minutes to break the afternoon up. So many empty rooms make me shudder sometimes."

"Good-by, Mis' Thorne. Come agin!"

When the door had closed behind her visitor a slow smile widened the long since toothless mouth of Grandma Dunker. She wagged her head and spoke triumphantly to herself. "Got rid of her quick enough, didn't I, soon's I stopped talkin' about Jimmy and begun to talk about brown bread!"

She went to the cherry bureau and rummaged in her reticule until she found a folded sheet of note paper. Again her spectacles came forth and she read, jerkily: "In case of death or dangerous illness notify . . . . That's it. Now I'll get rid of that plaguey young 'un."

She stumped into the kitchen, sniffing at the good smell of fresh bread. She poked the loaves with a crooked forefinger.

"You might uv done worse!" to Lucy Ann, bringing a flush of pleasure to the girl's face. "If I live long enough I'll make a good cook out of you — now get on your things an' go up to Mis' Thorne's after a receipt. March your boots, and don't come back for half an hour! I got a letter to write, and I don't want you around under foot!"

"Yes, ma'am!"

As Grandma Dunker had intended, the well deserved compliment put wings to her feet. Lucy Ann

disappeared in a flurry. Muttering, the old woman went back into the front room.

"She's a good young 'un. . . . I don't know how I'm goin' to fix up this business. Drat it! I'm an old fool!"

For half an hour, breathing hard, she labored with pen and ink.

A week from the day of the brown bread recipe Grandma Abigail Dunker sat in the front room and stared out across the road and beyond the steely blue river. Taking counsel with herself, she admitted that she was as mad as a wet hen. She had been an old fool, she believed, and the result and the consciousness of her folly combined to take away the good taste of food and the pleasure in the warmth of a hardwood fire.

Lucy Ann came in, uncertainly.

"Gran'ma —"

"Well? Say it! Don't stand there like a gawky, with your mouth open!"

"Gran'ma, ain't it — ain't it 'most time for that catalogue to be a-comin'?"

"What catalogue, you loon?" She tried to speak as though there were no such thing as a catalogue in the world.

"The mail order catalogue you said you'd send for with the stamp in Aunt Emmeline's letter!"

"Hey?"

"I see you mail the letter!" Driven by the bottled anticipation of a week, Lucy Ann had mustered

rare courage. "I see you put it in the letter box right the next day after the stamp come!"

"You did, hey? Huh! Well!" The voice of the old woman lost much of its raucousness as she continued. "Well, Lucy Ann, I'm sorry, but they ain't going to be no catalogue."

"No catalogue?" The girl's face looked stupid, as from a blow. "No catalogue, Gran'ma?"

"No, Lucy Ann, I had some business to 'tend to with that postage stamp. The letter wa'n't for the catalogue. I ain't got another stamp and I ain't a-goin' to begin to beg — not at my age."

"Oh dear!"

Into the simple exclamation Lucy Ann threw all the woe of her broken hope; of the loss of a long winter's amusement; of the fading of the pictures of many dresses. Unashamed, she sniveled; and her shoulders drew down hopelessly as she turned back to the kitchen.

Grandma Dunker stared after her with a mouth that had become a straight line. Hitherto through the week it had been her own disappointment and self-reproach with which she had been concerned: it had made her peevish and irritable, she knew, and perhaps just a little mite hard on Lucy Ann. Now she realized that the girl had borne up remarkably well, repressing all the coltish tendency of youth to kick and yaw against the bit. Expectancy of the catalogue alone had given her this unusual meekness. Through the far, dim decades Grandma sighted something of the inwardness of a girl's mind, and

she knew now that here was a little tragedy in her house. To her the loss had been one of those mockeries with which life sometimes taunts the old, but to Lucy Ann denial of that printed and pictured story of silks and flummeries was poignant grief.

"Dum it!" she muttered. "I'd jest as lief swear as not!"

Through her anger a knock sounded. It was a well-bred knock, and she answered it with the shade of deference that she had had for three generations of Mansfields.

Laura Thorne came in with a shining afternoon face; a face filled with the glow of late happiness. No longer did her eyes seem faded: her shoulders again had the Mansfield set.

"He's come!" she cried, with the ecstasy of those who sing from their hearts. "He came last night on the sleeper, and walked all the way from the station! The money that boy must have spent on the things he brought me — it's wicked! Things I'll never use in the world!"

But there was no condemnation in her voice, rich with modulations of tenderness. Grandma Dunker grunted.

"Who's come?"

"Jimmy — my boy! Aren't you interested, Grandma?"

"Yes. I be. He's a Mansfield, even if his name ain't the same."

"Of course he is!" Her words pattered out happily, like running children. "He looks like his

grandfather more than ever! He's coming down to see you as soon as he gets rested — I let him sleep to-day."

"Huh!"

"He's grown better looking — but you'll see! I've got to hurry back now and get his dinner — it just seemed that I must run down and tell you!"

"I'm glad, Laury. You tell him I'm glad."

"You can tell him yourself, Grandma!" Laura Thorne laughed like a girl as she went out, bringing the door shut smartly. One not seeing her would have said that a girl had flown in and out of the room.

"Dum it all!" anathemized Grandma Dunker, emphatically and for her own ears. She stared fixedly toward the cherry bureau. "This's a nice puppy-snatch I've got myself into!"

She began to edge her rocking chair toward the bureau, letting her cane fall to the floor with a great clatter.

"You rap for me, Gran'ma?"

She twisted around sharply, to find Lucy Ann standing in the kitchen door.

"Rap?" she barked. "Huh! March your boots out of here — and don't you let me see hide nor hair of you 'til I *do* rap!"

The eyes and nose of Lucy Ann were red and swollen; her voice had been clogged by prisoned sobs. Grandma Dunker jerked open the big bottom drawer of the cherry bureau.

"Dum the luck!" she growled; and added, angrily: "I ain't goin' to swear no more!"

Her hand, veined and knotted and marked by many labors, lifted tenderly a long, white-sheeted bundle. She laid it across her lap and drew out the pins slowly. Inside the sheet was a layer of paper, and the smell of red cedar chips — sovereign against moths. Then to view came the heavy folds of a silk dress; black with a tiny sprig of lavender. Yards and yards of cloth were in the skirt, but the waist had been made to fit tightly the body of a young and slender woman. The silk fibres sounded protestingly as the old woman's rough hands caressed them.

"Old Mis' Mansfield give it to me for a weddin' present." She spoke in a whisper. "They's no use denyin' I'd of looked nice laid out in that — but it won't make no difference to a corpse. And she's young and the fun of bein' alive won't wear off for quite a spell yet. Huh!"

Grandma Dunker stooped, recovered her cane, and whanged the floor in deadly earnest. The head and shoulders of Lucy Ann appeared, tentatively.

"Come on in here!" commanded Grandma, but with husky gruffness. "Don't stand there and gawp! Got your bread out of the oven? All right, then. Now stand up here in front of me for a minute!"

"Gran'ma!" breathed Lucy Ann, doubtfully. "Gr —"

"Stop talkin' when I'm busy! I know what you're goin' to say, an' I'll tell you. It's a silk dress for you, an' I don't want to hear no complainin' because it ain't red, or green, or yaller!"

"A *silk* dress?" A hundred wiggles shook the sturdy frame of Lucy Ann. "Oh glory —"

"Stand on both feet, can't you? How be I goin' to take your measure? Guess you ain't so down in the mouth over that catalogue as you was — hey?"

"Will you make it up with a long skirt, Gran'-ma?"

"Huh! I thought not! Yes — to your shoe-tops. Stand still, you loon! We ain't got time to clutter our minds up with a catalogue — it'll take a considerable spell to make this dress. If you twitch your arms agin, young lady, I'll box your ears and you won't get the dress!"

Instantly Lucy Ann became as rigid as the stove poker and so she stood, with only her gloating eyes uncontrolled, until the ordeal was over. Then the vigorous cane chased her into the kitchen and Grand-ma Dunker was alone once more.

Carefully she spread the silk dress out on her bed, ready for the shears of sacrifice. She turned her back upon it, resolutely, and stumped to the front door — then out into the pale autumn sunlight. She lifted her head and sniffed the keen air, staring off toward the bright blue peaks that reached up until they disappeared in the unclouded peace of the heavens.

"Things is sweet and smelly this time of year," she murmured. "Makes a body feel young again!"

## Sark of the Leewards

By RICHARD BUTLER GLAENZER

"The wreck of all that's solid, big and fine,"  
The skipper groaned. "Ten years ago, to dine  
With Sark redeemed whole months in ports like this.  
I never met a man so grand with dreams. . . .  
Jove! When he talked, his eyes would send out  
gleams

Brighter than island fireflies. But his wife,  
She'd squat there like a Carib-stone. No word  
From her; just sullenness that sneered 'Absurd!'  
Yet she was handsome in some nameless way. . . .  
And now he's drinking, slacking, slipping down  
To God knows what; still, miles above this town.  
Tell him I sent you. Patois is his forte —  
One of a score. He'll lend you any books  
You need, and — don't confuse him with his looks!"

The townsfolk bored me, so I looked up Sark  
One night. The weeds around his bungalow  
Blotted the path. The garden seemed to grow  
Haphazard; branches struck my face, one sweet,  
Too sweet, a frangipani's. The whole porch  
Was snarled with vines. No lights. I flashed my  
torch,

Made out the door and knocked. A shuffling step,  
And I was greeted with a slattern's "Well?"  
A reddish wrapper was the woman's shell:  
Her face I never really saw; her voice,  
My business stated, rasped me with a "There!"



A finger as abruptly pointing where  
A shadowy figure lounged. I coughed. It rose  
Yawning, advanced, said thickly: "I am Sark,  
If it is he you want." It was so dark  
I all but missed the hand whose firm, strong grip  
Denied the fumes whose presence proved him weak.  
I hedged. No use. "Decent of you to seek  
Me out like this. Come, try this Berbice chair!  
The skipper sent you? Good! The skipper's friend  
Would be *amicus certus in* — the end!"  
This with a mirthless laugh. "A smoke? a drink?"  
My cool refusal made him laugh again,  
This time like sunlight when it braves March rain.

The woman did not linger. I was glad;  
I would have never stuck it if she had,  
And suddenly I felt his need cry to me  
And knew that I must listen, though I fear  
Mixed with the wish to help was that to hear.

His eyes — the skipper was correct — they blazed;  
And I, I listened, startled, shaken, dazed  
By all the splendors — more than speech was his —  
By all the rocking splendors which rolled out  
Funneled with flame, a gold-spun water-spout.  
Such was his force, his swinging speed, his height,  
Reaching from silt to star — until he broke  
And sucked me down to share a stifling smoke  
Through which dragged heavily his final words,  
Pitiless, shameless, hopeless, first and last,  
As if a god had turned iconoclast:

"She? It's the old, old story. Man's conceit  
Hankers for what it fails to understand, —  
The fascination of Fate's ampersand.  
But Fate, remember, is the weaker self  
Made master of the will. So what I got  
Is what I destined; what I am, a sot,  
Only my own velleity in terms  
Of liquor. For the choice was mine, and then  
Again the choice was mine, all mine! Amen."

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### **My Grave**

By HAZEL HALL

Make it fast with earth and grass;  
Dig it deep, dig it deep;  
Let me hear no footstep pass  
Where I sleep.

Let me hear no wind I love,  
Scattering, garnering;  
Feel no stir of roots above;  
Know no Spring.

For if I hear you, Life,  
I shall reach up with roots  
To drink the dew,  
Loving you;  
And I am tired, Life —  
I would sleep.

## Four Poems

By MARJORIE ALLEN SEIFFERT

### SORROW

Sorrow stands in a wide place,  
Blind — blind —  
Beauty and joy are petals blown  
Across her granite face;  
They cannot find  
Sight or sentience in stone.

Yesterday's beauty and joy lie deep  
In sorrow's heart, asleep.

### THE MOONLIGHT SONATA

My soul, storm-beaten as an ancient pier  
Stands forth into the sea: wave on slow wave  
Of shining music, luminous and grave,  
Lifting against me, pouring through me, here  
Find wafts of unforgotten chords which rise  
And droop like clinging sea-weed. You, so white,  
So still, so helpless, on this fathomless night  
Float like a corpse with living, tortured eyes.  
Deep waves wash you against me: you impart  
No comfort to my spirit, give no sign  
Your inarticulate lips can taste the brine  
Drowning the secret timbers of my heart.

## ELEGY

I would be autumn earth and hold  
Your beautiful body, slain,  
Where lying still and cold  
Only the winter rain  
Shall touch your limbs and face;  
Where the white frost shall wed  
Your body to black mould  
In the close passionless embrace  
Of that dark marriage bed:  
I would be autumn earth and hold  
Your beautiful body, dead.

## BALLAD

Follow, follow me into the South  
And if you are brave and wise  
I'll buy you laughter for your mouth,  
Sorrow for your eyes.

I'll buy you laughter, wild and sweet,  
And sorrow, grey and still,  
But you must follow with willing feet  
Over the farthest hill.

Follow, follow me into the South,  
You may return tomorrow,  
Wearing my kisses on your mouth,  
In your eyes my sorrow.

## **"Blessed Are the Dead"**

By MAGDELENE CRAFT

"Blessed are the dead," droned the minister. Liza shivered a little. From her place in the mourners' room she could see the black draped coffin with its load of tightly bunched flowers atop. The open door showed the dusty street in the morning sunlight beyond the little grassplot of a lawn. Liza glanced across at John. He was sitting with his head bowed, looking absently at the floor.

"Blessed are the dead that sleep in the Lord," — the minister was repeating. It did not seem to Liza as if her mother were dead. Instead of the minister's monotone, she could hear as plainly as if the speaker were beside her; — "I don't want for you to marry John," came her mother's strong, clear voice. "He's always questionin' in his mind what people will say. Right ain't right for him, it's just what folks'll think of him. But you'll marry him anyhow, I suppose. You wouldn't be my daughter if you didn't." It had been so long ago. And Liza had married John. Good patient John. Her mother's words rang in her mind — "not right to him. Just what people will say." It was quite true. But he had been a good man to her, and always gentle to her mother when she had grown old and come to live with them. A little flash of resentment stirred in Liza. John had been patient and her mother had badgered him unmercifully.

Especially about the church. John was a member, not because of any devout conviction, but because it

had "looked better." Her mother had always protested against the church. Her long life of service and help had never had its inspiration from churchly doctrine. "I reckon there is a God," she had said, "but he ain't confined in the churches. Them's shut six days a week an' a real God has to tend to business more'n one day out of seven."

When she grew old, she grew intolerant, — she had hated the ministers unreasoningly. "I hope I die at Marthy's," she had said. Martha was her other daughter. "Her an' Ed wouldn't be afraid to have me buried without a minister, if I wanted it. Ed ain't afraid of what folks say." Ed was Martha's husband. Ed was not a particularly good man. But his breezy joviality gave him the ability to do things counter to public opinion, an ability that her mother had always admired. And Liza was her mother's daughter.

"Ed ain't such a good man, but Marthy's happier than you are." The words echoed in her mind. She had denied them with a passionate loyalty.

"The Lord gave —" the voice of the minister intruded on her thoughts. Liza caught her hands together in a painful clasp. How often she had heard the dead woman protest against the verse. "The Lord may ha' given, but it's generally man's foolishness that takes away. If anybody says that at my funeral, I'll rise up in the casket."

But they were saying it at her funeral — if that woman there in the casket were her mother. Liza could not believe it. The memory of the last days

came before her. Martha had come, and Ed. Someway at the last her mother had forgotten her resentment at John. Her mind had grown clearer, more tolerant. "I suppose the neighbors 'ld talk if the parson wasn't at my funeral," she had said. "It don't make no difference to me either way. But the feelin's of the livin' is of more importance than those of the dead. Suit yourself, Lizy." They had always been an outspoken family, but Liza had made no answer. Ed had looked contemptuously at her and John. She had been sorry — heartsore, not for herself, but for John.

She moved uneasily at the recollection. A sudden surge of feeling pressed her further into her torment. The day they had made arrangements for the funeral, she had asked him, "Shall we ask the minister, John?" She had expected him to say yes, but he had looked at her with a queer humility, — "What you want, Lizy, — or what she wanted," — and he had glanced at Ed, Ed with a little sneer on his handsome face.

So he had shown he was afraid, afraid of what Ed and Martha might say. Liza, in swift pain and anger, had flamed out, "Then we'll ask him! You see about it today." She was not afraid. And John had looked at her as if she had struck him. But now, — as she listened to the monotonous talk, the remorse for her disloyalty to the dead overwhelmed her. Would the minister never be through? It seemed as if she could scream, there in that little room. Martha was sobbing.

Liza looked again at John. He had raised his head and was staring at the minister.

"The Lord gave and the Lord hath—" John had risen and crossed the room, swiftly, surely; he was standing at the minister's side. "Don't say it," he said, low but clear. "She wouldn't ha' wanted it. She never did want it." The people were all staring at him in amaze. Ed was gazing, jaws foolishly apart. John flushed a little, then,—"You can just say 'Blessed be the name of the Lord.' She lived like that." And he was back in the mourners' room again. The minister, in confusion, mumbled, "Let us pray."

But Liza, her plain face radiant, was looking at her husband. Pain, remorse, anger were swept away. Her mother would have been glad of this—and in all the world she would never again be ashamed of John. It seemed as if in her soul a thousand tongues were choiring, "Blessed be the name of the Lord!"

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### **Pastel for March**

By MABEL KINGSLEY RICHARDSON

The twilight skies are grey with gathering rain,  
The melting snows lie grey on hill and plain,  
And silver is the wild duck's wing;  
The river, and the barren wind-swept trees  
Are grey. Yet strangely do I sense in these  
The rosy-footed ways of spring.



